

City of Corunna  
Special Joint Meeting  
Thursday, September 10, 1998

Present: Lisa Hitchcock, City Manager; Tom Svrcek, Director of Public Works; Yvonne Long, City Clerk; Ron Smith, Treasurer/Assessor; Chief Mark Hetfield, Police Department; Mayor Avery Weaver; Councilperson Deborah Bendall; Councilperson David Dumond; Councilperson Robert Ockerman; Councilperson Martin Reid; Councilperson Joseph Williams; Janeene Cenkush; Jan Scott; Kay Seward; Shauna Bayless; Jack Gerhold; Renee Essenburg; Keith Johnson; Larry Runyan; Jeffrey Hetfield; Cal Hornus; Don Olmsted; Bill Graham; Terry Hayes; Kathy Hetfield; Margaret Brown; Dr. James Billis; Doug Piggott; and other concerned citizens.

The special meeting was called to order in the McCurdy Park Community Center by Mayor Weaver at 7:03 p.m.

COMMENTS: Mayor Weaver welcomed everyone in attendance for coming to the meeting.

Ms. Hitchcock welcomed everyone and explained the joint meeting was scheduled at the suggestion of a city resident and the present Downtown Development Authority president, Dr. Billis. She thanked Dr. Billis for suggesting the meeting.

Mayor Avery Weaver stated he decided he should also say something after requesting the councilpersons to take a couple of minutes to introduce themselves. He further stated being mayor has been quite an experience. He also stated he was excited about everyone's attitude to work together and commended the councilpersons for all of the hours they were giving.

Mayor Pro-tem Deborah Bendall introduced herself and advised she had been on the council for three years and represented Ward Two. She stated she had seen a lot of improvements in the city's sewers and streets. She further stated volunteerism was strong in the city and thanked everyone who was presently serving the city and those who had served the city in the past.

Councilperson David Dumond introduced himself and advised he was one of the Ward One representatives and one of the new people on the council. He further advised he spent twelve years on the planning commission and had found that serving on the council was entirely different. He also advised he was a semi-retired business owner who has time to devote to the city. He stated the city has a super fine council, and Mayor Weaver was running a tight ship. He further stated he was willing to listen to the residents when contacted.

Councilperson Robert Ockerman introduced himself and advised he represented Ward One. He further advised he has been involved in service clubs and was bitter about the government taking so much of the people's money. He also advised he appreciated everyone for stepping up as he has done and stated he was interested in the downtown development and new business development. He explained he was a member of the Corunna-Caledonia Fire Board and the Forest Management Commission. Councilperson Ockerman stated the city government runs extremely efficient and has excellent people working for the city. He further stated the city manager and mayor are about as good as he has seen.

Councilperson Martin Reid introduced himself and advised he represented Ward Three and had previously served on the Planning Commission and Parks and Recreation Commission prior to serving on the council. He stated he likes what he has seen happening in the city; the McCurdy Park ballfield has been developed, the Krib's house was moved to the historical village, the playscape was built, and the McCurdy Park Community Center.

Councilperson Joseph Williams introduced himself and advised he was the other Ward Two representative. He commended everyone for making the community what it was. He advised his goals included long range planning, positive progress and growth for the city. He further advised improving the city's streets, sidewalks, and sewer enhancements were essential for the future growth of the city. He also advised he was encouraged to see the closer working relationship between the city government and local business leaders. Councilperson Williams stated he hopes the city remains moving in a positive direction and a city everyone would be proud of.

Dave Hilliker advised he represented the Cemetery Board and was in attendance because Bob Volek was in Alaska. He further advised the new cemetery signs were in place, the mausoleum roof had been repaired and the mortar around the rocks had been repointed. He also advised he had information about getting a historical site marker for the cemetery when the cemetery board has their next meeting.

Keith Johnson advised he has done a little bit of everything in the city for the last 30 years. He explained the Zoning Board of Appeals had three basic responsibilities: hearing appeals of administrative decisions such as denied zoning permits, enforcement matters, site plans and special uses; ordinance interpretations; and variance requests. He further explained the Zoning Board of Appeals must document all decisions in writing and the rationale behind the decisions in every case. He also explained the Zoning Board of Appeals handles non-conforming use requests. Mr. Johnson stated the main duty of the Zoning Board of Appeals was to keep people off Gary Palmer's back. He further stated Mr. Palmer was bound by law and the Zoning Board of Appeals was established to back him up.

Jack Gerhold advised he was the secretary of the Board of Review. He explained the main meeting is held for three days in March at which time the public is invited to come and discuss their taxes. He further explained the Board of Review reviews the tax assessments for the city and set the tax roll for the year. He also explained a second meeting is held in July to correct clerical errors made in March and to review homestead corrections. In December, a meeting is held to correct clerical errors and to review homestead corrections that have to made for the year.

Don Olmsted advised he was glad to see representation from all of the boards and commissions in attendance including representatives from Caledonia Township. He further advised he has lived in the city for over 65 years and his family has been involved with the City of Corunna forever. He also advised he was involved with the Building Authority and he and Margaret Brown were hanging on in order to do something for the library. Mr. Olmsted explained the Building Authority serves at the pleasure of the council and was currently in an inactive status.

Jan Scott advised she represented the Charter Review Commission. She further advised the commission was a volunteer organization and was formed in July of this year. She also advised the city's charter was the basic building block upon which the city government was formed and the first city charter was adopted in November of 1970. Ms. Scott stated a public hearing would be held on the charter revision and asked for citizen input. The charter would then be referred to the city council, attorney general and governor for approval. She further stated the commission hopes to have the charter voted on in the November 1999 election. She also stated a copy of the city charter could be picked up at city hall.

Joe Williams advised he represented the Ambulance Board and was new to the board. He further advised the most dramatic change the board had initiated was providing Advanced Life Support to the community. A one-year contract was signed with Lansing/Mason Ambulance to see if this service was the kind of service the community wanted to have. He also advised the board was presently in negotiations regarding the purchase of the Crane property next to the ambulance facility and was also working on billing procedures.

Dr. Jim Billis advised he represented the Downtown Development Authority and truly felt the meeting was historical and thanked everyone for attending. He further advised the purpose of the Downtown Development Authority was to correct and prevent urban deterioration, to encourage economic development and activity, to encourage neighborhood revitalization and historic preservation, to authorize the acquisition and disposal of interest in real and personal property, to provide for the creation and implementation of development plans, to provide for the creation of a board to govern the authority and to prescribe the boards powers and duties. Dr. Billis stated he felt the Downtown Development Authority was in business to be in business. He further stated the Downtown Development Authority was started in January, 1988 with the first meeting held on May 24, 1988. He also stated the Downtown Development Authority was presently working on the Streetscape Project. The streets will be widened, sidewalks will be replaced, decorative lighting will be added, benches will be added and electrical wiring will be placed underground.

Ron Smith advised he represented the Economic Development Fund. He further advised the fund was established by the city in the mid-1980's to help local businesses and industries with development, job creation, new product lines and new equipment purchase. He also advised the board meets when requested by an applicant. At that time, the board reviews the application, approves the loan and forwards the application to the Michigan Department of Commerce to get final approval. The process takes around six months to complete. Mr. Smith stated once approval was granted from the Michigan Department of Commerce, the city has the authority to loan money through the Economic Development Fund. The city attorney prepares an agreement between the city and the applicant before the money is released. He further stated the last applicant was Grandma's Recipes.

Cal Hornus advised he represented the Corunna-Caledonia Fire Board. He further advised the board was a five person board comprised of two township representatives, two city representatives, and one person at large. He also advised the fire board instituted a fire run fee a few years back and at the present time, there is in excess of \$50,000 in the fund. Mr. Hornus stated the fire board was presently looking at buying a new fire truck and new trucks run between \$130,000 and \$150,000. The fire run fee will allow the fire board to place a sizable down payment on the new truck. He further stated the fire board would have enough monthly income to take care of any payments that may occur.

Lisa Hitchcock advised she represented the Forest Management Commission and was presently two members short. She further advised Councilperson Ockerman has stated he would be willing to serve on the commission and asked for volunteers. She also advised the commission was responsible for all of the tree planting in the parks, right-of-ways, and cemetery. Ms. Hitchcock stated the commission has been inactive for the past several years but would become more active in the future.

Karen Hornus advised she represented the Fourth of July Commission. She further advised the commission has been in existence for about nine years and has continued to grow. The commission hopes to have an entertainment stage built next year and plan to bring the bears back for the day as part of the celebration. She also advised the commission wants to work with the Historical Commission to promote the village, to work with the city to promote the park, and to work with Team 21 to improve and promote the fireworks. Ms. Hornus stated the commission was a hard working group and have a lot of fun. She invited everyone to be a part of the commission and advised the commission meets on the third Thursday of the month.

Deborah Bendall advised she represented the Library Board and had been a member of the board for one and one-half years. She further advised Library Law was difficult to understand, and the board was in the process of educating its new members about the laws. She also advised the automated system was up and running, and the books and library cards have been bar coded. Ms. Bendall stated there were several computers in the library that were obtained through donations and grants, and should have Internet access soon. She further stated the library receives its funding from state aid, General Fund commitments from the City of Corunna and Caledonia Township, penal fines, and donations from individuals and the Friends of the Library, which is a non-profit organization. She also stated the library recycles books through book sales. Ms. Bendall advised the library was a small building and hopes to be part of any new facilities that might come about. She encouraged everyone to stop and visit the library, but advised everyone not to come all at once because not everyone would make it through the door.

Dennis Dunnigan advised he represented the Mid-County Planning Group. He explained the Mid-County Planning group was a Team 21 sub-committee and consisted of two members from the City of Corunna, City of Owosso, Caledonia Township, Owosso Township and one member from the county. He advised the group has looked at compiling the future land use plans, the policies that go behind the plans, the rules governing the plans, and doing some environmental constraints mapping. He further advised the group has become involved with looking with the Corunna-Owosso Chamber of Commerce and the Shiawassee Development Council to look into transportation planning issues. There have been concerns about the access the community has to the freeways and across town, the level of congestion on M-21 and the ability to travel around the community without always going on the same state trunk line. Mr. Dunnigan stated the group had been around for approximately one year and try to meet monthly.

Joe Sawyer advised he represented the Owosso Community Airport. He explained the airport was owned by Shiawassee County, the City of Corunna, the City of Owosso, Owosso Township and Caledonia Township, and was governed by the Shiawassee Airport Board. He advised it has been challenging to work with the four other governmental entities. He further advised the airport has made a lot of progress in the last four to five years. He also advised when airport development is discussed it does not mean expansion but means

improving the infrastructure and what the airport has to offer. Mr. Sawyer advised the airport board had lacked an airport operating agreement between the five government bodies, which effected the airport's ability to not get state or federal funding. Since the airport agreement was signed, the airport has received state funding for two projects. The first project received \$36,000 to update the Land Use Plan which deals with everything except runways, and the airport had to match ten-percent. The second project received \$4,000 to do tree trimming, and the airport had to match four-percent.

Kathy Hetfield advised she represented the Parks and Recreation Commission. She explained the commission was formed two years ago and consisted of representatives from the other commissions, council, and two at-large members. She further explained the playscape was completed this year and thanked everyone for their help with the project. Ms. Hetfield advised Gary Schooley was hired as the Parks and Recreation Director and having a person to oversee the activities has been a big step for the city. Ms. Hetfield further advised the Festival of Trees and Cancer Race for Life has been held in McCurdy, and the commission plan to develop the park into a bigger resource. The McCurdy Park Community Center was recently renamed because the building has a lot of potential. She also advised the commission plans to come to council on what will be needed to bring the McCurdy Park Community Center up to date. Ms. Hetfield stated the commission was also looking at changing the name of the commercial building. She further stated there were plans to have music in the park next year. She also stated the commission has been asked to help with the Halloween party this year, and they plan to turn the playscape into a haunted playscape.

Jack Gerhold advised he represented the Planning Commission. He further advised the commission reviews information submitted, makes a decision and then makes a recommendation to the city council to either approve or deny an issue. He also advised the commission cannot directly make any decisions on its own, and the final decision is made by city council. Mr. Gerhold stated a new Master Plan and Zoning Ordinance was developed for the city and both need to be reviewed and updated constantly. He further stated public hearings are held on decisions that involve the public. Mr. Gerhold explained the commission handles lot split requests, zoning changes, site plan review of new construction or changes to an existing structure. One of the site plans reviewed during the last two years was the Riverwalk Apartments development.

Bill Graham advised he represented the Softball Commission. He explained the commission meets four times a year, and the basic job of the commission was to oversee the softball program and to make sure the program operates at a breakeven status, financially. He further explained there was team player representation on the commission. He also explained the player fees were very nominal for the benefits the players receive from playing softball. Mr. Graham advised when a fee increase came to the commission, a decision was made to increase both the team and player fees. He further advised a third ballfield was added this year, and there were complaints about the field, but the players from out of town loved it, so our players are definitely spoiled. He also advised concession stand improvements are planned for next year, and he would like to see the lighting improved at the new ballfield because the outfield is dark. Mr. Graham stated Gary Schooley was able to get a co-ed state tournament this year and does a great job.

Tom Svrcek advised he represented the Waste Water Treatment Plant. He further advised the city closed their treatment facility in 1980 and joined the Mid-Shiawassee County Waste Water Treatment Plant, which consists of the City of Owosso, Caledonia Township and Owosso Township. He also advised the board oversees the budget and operations of the plant even though the City of Owosso controls the plant on a daily basis. Mr. Svrcek explained the plant does cost a ton of money but at least the toilets flush. Mr. Svrcek encouraged everyone to visit the site, because it was a fantastic area to see.

Kay Seward advised she represented the Historical Commission. She explained the commission has more duties than just the historical village, but the historical village was the biggest part of the commission's job. She further explained there have been many weddings held in the church that bring people in to Corunna. Ms. Seward advised the commission has been getting new and younger help. She further advised most of the money received by the commission does come from the rental of the church, but there was also a small fee collected when a tour group wants to tour the village. She also advised the commission has received donations from the Corunna Women's Club, the Zonta Club and from other organizations and fundraisers. Ms Seward informed everyone a card party fundraiser was coming up.

GENERAL DISCUSSION: Ms. Hitchcock stated the meeting was scheduled to get some ideas from everyone about where the joint meeting should go, how often the joint meeting should be held and ideas on how each board and commission could help each other.

Dr. Billis stated all of the commissions do volunteer work and the bottom line was economics (money). A lot of the commissions have to solicit money, and without it, the commissions have a tough time maintaining and growing. He further stated he has learned that the people in Corunna are large hearted. The boards and commissions could be utilized to promote and to generate revenue to develop Corunna.

Ms. Hetfield stated an overall community plan was needed to get people into Corunna and to spend their money here.

Mr. Dumond stated council has discussed what council's goal would be, and the goal council selected was to improve the city's municipal complex. City hall has outgrown the facility, the fire department is too small, and the library has outgrown their facility. He further stated it was discussed to build a new municipal building where everything could be located on one piece of property. Dr. Billis agreed and stated it was tough when most things are done with donations.

Doug Piggott stated he disagreed that the principle goal should be economics. The principle goal should be quality of life and not money/revenue. He further stated money was one of the tools that are used, but quality of life should not be sacrificed to generate revenues. A successful community is one that maintains their quality of life and attracts people to the community. He also stated the boards and commissions needed to integrate with each other. He suggested the main focus should be what the city has to do to maintain and enhance the quality of life in the community and how to generate the revenues needed to do that. Don Olmsted agreed and stated the strengths of the boards and commissions need to be emphasized. Money is always a factor, but if you get people involved various monies would

be taken care of. Mr. Olmsted stated the Softball Commission has analyzed their situation and has increased their fees to make them self-supporting. This was what all of the commissions had to do and throwing money around was not the answer. Dr. Billis agreed that quality of life should be the main focus, but money was needed in order for the city to enhance the quality of life.

Mayor Weaver stated there was also a need to work with neighboring units of government. The county sits within the city's boundaries, and they are going through some growing pains. He asked what could be done to work together and to help each other.

Dr. Billis asked Mr. Piggott if he had any specifics to improve the community. Mr. Piggott stated one issue that has been brought up was possibly relocating the governmental building. This would be an example where all of the boards and commissions could become involved and have an effect on each other. He further stated this type of activity would be best done with the efforts of all of the organizations. Dr. Billis stated there were many ways to get financing to accomplish the things the boards and commissions would like to have, but one way that was not being explored was utilizing creativity to create revenue in the different boards and commissions that already exist.

Dennis Dunnigan stated signage has been discussed between the Downtown Development Authority, the city and the county. There are a lot of people who come to the county facilities who do not know they can stop at the historical village or who have not been inside the courthouse. He further stated the attractions are not advertised enough. He suggested placing brochures at rest stops to enhance people to come to the city. Mayor Weaver advised the chamber of commerce could help with some of the promotion. Ms. Hitchcock advised that was the intent of their newly organized convention bureau. Ms. Hornus stated brochures placed at rest stops would not help the Fourth of July, but ads have been placed in other publications. She further stated the commission does ask for money to promote their activities, but the basic concept was to have an inexpensive day for the people.

Mr. Olmsted stated the Downtown Development Authority has also been negligent. He further stated there are a lot of things the authority should be doing. He asked if the authority has thought about the old gas station site. He suggested promoting the downtown area on a web site. He also stated the majority of people in the city are older and asked if anything had been done to promote Corunna to this group. There are a lot of things that could be done. Judy Horton stated she read something about a bus route being developed. That would be a big benefit. There are a lot of older people who are driving that should not be driving. She further stated all of the boards and commissions need money, but people are also needed to work.

Mr. Piggott stated the next step could be to have some type of overall guiding plan where all of the boards and commissions could have some input. He further stated if the city wants to have all of the organizations meet on a regular basis, a vision statement should be developed on what the city was trying to achieve. He suggested breaking into four or five groups that are intimately related to each other and then have the group's report back to the larger group as a whole.

Ms. Hitchcock asked when the next meeting should be held. Mr. Piggott stated a lot of preparation to do a lot of preparation was not needed; it was just the matter of people having the time.

Mr. Dumond stated after listening to the Building Authority's presentation, he wondered if the authority should take over the investigation on building a new complex.

Ms. Hitchcock advised the main purpose of the Building Authority is funding according to the ordinance that established the Authority. They are the bonding authority.

Mayor Weaver suggested setting the next meeting for the later part of January. Mr. Piggott stated January would be good, but part of the population would not be here. Mayor Weaver stated the city council and the city manager would look at scheduling the next meeting in January.

Mr. Dunnigan stated there should be a vision and if there is to be promotion discussion, a message was needed. He further stated there had to be an agreement on what the statement would be to reach people who have not discovered the community. Mr. Piggott suggested we want your money.

Ms. Hornus asked Mayor Weaver what the purpose of the meeting was. Mayor Weaver stated the purpose of the meeting was to bring everyone together to remind everyone about the committees the city has and to strengthen everyone's minds on how everyone can work together. Ms. Hornus stated she had a problem with having another meeting and asked what the meeting was striving for. Ms. Bendall advised there needs to be a clear focus and a goal. There is no way this could be accomplished in individual commissions. Mayor Weaver stated there needs to be centralized community goals that would benefit everyone. Everyone needs to work together to grow and to bring in new jobs. He further stated the meeting has been informative and asked what could be done to bring people into the area. He also stated he sensed the chamber of commerce was interested in helping the whole area, and the neighboring government leaders were very interested in trying to work together instead of fighting or protecting their turf which has occurred in the past. Everyone needs to work together.

John Bendall advised he was at the meeting to look for avenues for Caledonia Township and the City of Corunna that could result in a win/win situation. He agreed with Mr. Piggott that quality of life such as water, sewer, ambulance, etc. was important. Mr. Bendall stated when Corunna thrives it helps Caledonia Township and when Caledonia Township thrives it helps Corunna. He further stated he has seen many changes in Corunna in the last two years and has seen Corunna willing to work with the township board.

Ms. Bendall stated since many of the commissions have a representative on the Parks and Recreation Commission it might be possible to substitute the commission's regular meeting for the joint meeting that month.

FINAL REMARKS: Mayor Weaver thanked Dr. Billis for getting the joint meeting idea started and everyone for attending the meeting. He advised council would get back with everyone to build on what was discussed

ADJOURN: The meeting adjourned at 9:20 p.m.